
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Author(s): Durrani, Marium

Title: Designers by any other name: exploring the sociomaterial practices of vernacular garment menders

Year: 2018

Version: Final published version

Please cite the original version:

Durrani, Marium. 2018. Designers by any other name: exploring the sociomaterial practices of vernacular garment menders. Design Research Society International Conference: Catalyst. DRS International Conference Series. Volume 4. 1731-1746. ISSN 2398-3132 (electronic). ISBN 978-1-912294-19-0 (electronic). DOI: 10.21606/dma.2018.495.

Rights: © 2018 Design Research Society. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

All material supplied via Aaltodoc is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.

Designers by any other name: exploring the sociomaterial practices of vernacular garment menders

Studies around the cultures of design indicate a mutually constitutive relationship designers share with materials when in practice. However, professional designers are not the only ones experiencing proximate relations with materials. With the recent emergence of community-based repair workshops, non-professional designer practices of fixing things, like garments, reveal sites of active material tinkering aiding transitions in current clothing disposal patterns. Using qualitative research methods and a sociomaterial theoretical lens, this paper takes the mending activities of non-professional menders in communal repair workshops in the city of Helsinki, Finland, as its point of departure. The study identifies these menders as vernacular menders and explores their dynamic practices to reveal the situated, embodied, routinized yet creative process of mending. The created outputs by the vernacular menders result in what is termed as informal design and point towards extending mainstream conceptualizations on design and creativity. In such a way, suggesting new insights on sociomaterial-enabled practices emerging around the brims of professional design.

Keywords; sociomaterial; vernacular menders; informal design; creativity

Introduction

The work of designers is often described as a practice involved in; giving 'form' to materials (Alexander, 1971), solving problems in unique ways (Cross, 2006) or more recently creating new materials (Myers, 2012). Designers' ways of doing and knowing has been studied at length and theorized in various ways. One stream of current studies has been around the cultures of design that take into account the embodied, situated and material aspects of the work of designers (Geertz, 1973; Hendersen, 1999 in Kimbell, 2011). Work coming out of this field acknowledges that designers are not detached from the world they work in or on (Kimbell, 2011). Additionally, pointing to a close and mutually constitutive relationship designers share with materials when in practice (Shove, Watson & Ingram, 2007). However, professional designers are not the only ones experiencing proximate relations with materials. In fact, quite often designed artefacts are not even used in ways as anticipated by designers rather get constantly re-constituted when in use (Shove et al., 2007). One site, where such re-configurations take shape, lies in the world of every day repairing of numerous daily artefacts (Graham & Thrift, 2007). Attending to these breakdowns not only result in an on-going re-constitution of relations between people and things but are also hotbeds for



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

unleashing everyday “creativity, invention, imagination, and artfulness” (Jackson, 2014:226). Additionally, with the recent emergence of community-based repair workshops, non-professional designer practices of fixing things such as garments are being recognized as platforms for aiding transitions in current clothing disposal patterns (Twigger, 2013; Chapman, 2013).

This paper will then take a closer look at what goes on when non-professional designers come together to mend their garments in these workshops. Furthermore, by way of a generative analysis, the embodied, situated and sociomaterial dependant aspects of mending will be explored. Creative and collective ways through which these dynamic menders extend garment life will reveal sites of informal design outcomes resultant in their mending practices. Thus, through an exploration of the doings (body), sayings (discourse) and materiality (artefacts) of mending practices, this study will bring two points to notice. Firstly, to emphasize the importance of understanding the inseparability of the social from the material, and vice versa, when exploring practices that may assist change (Drazin & Küchler, 2015). Taking such views allows for an equality of agency of humans with non-humans and expands current understandings when pursuing this endeavour. Secondly, point towards the blurring of designer-non-designer dualities that emerge from active material tinkering of non-professional menders. In such a way, new insights on sociomaterial enabled practices emerging around the brims of professional design will be gained. The paper will then identify *who* these everyday menders are, illustrate *how* they mend and discuss what happens when they *do* mend.

Theoretical framing

Before delving deeper into the aforementioned points of interest let's begin the discussion first by gaining an understanding of sociomaterial practices. Taking root in relational onto-epistemology, a sociomaterial theoretical framing works towards overcoming dualisms between mind-matter/body, social-material, nature-culture, human-nonhuman in developing an understanding of the making of the world (see Harraway, 1991; Barad, 2003, 2007). Put simply; a sociomaterial practice theoretical lens takes an egalitarian view on the agency of humans and non-humans when considering enactments of practices. What this means is that ways of doing and knowing are not be separated from the material or the social elements in the enactments of any practice (Gherardi, 2017). Rather, body, material and discourses are all but “expressions of the same sociomaterial world” (Gherardi, 2017: 42.). In other words, the knowing bodies and the things of knowledge do not exist as *a priori* entities merely coming into contact to mediate practice. Instead are co-constituted through an enactment of practices entangled in the social and the material simultaneously. Therefore, when denoting this mutual constitution of the social with the material in the carrying out of practices, ‘intractions’ replaces interactions and become the preferred term of use (Barad, 2007: 37). Giving importance to this materiality aspect within practices also exists in the literature coming out of the “practice turn” or the return to practices (Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002). Although, a unified definition of practice does not exist but for this paper I will take Reckwitz's definition to further our understanding of sociomaterial practices.

According to Reckwitz (2002) a practice is a “routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily and/or mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p. 249). Conceptualizing any practice in such a way points to a number of key aspects. Firstly, neat distinctions between thinking and doing are avoided and ways of knowing is taken as a hybrid of the mental with physical/bodily activities (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012) being carried out in a world not separated but ‘entangled’ in the social and material (Scott & Orlikowski, 2008). Knowledge is, seen, not as being sourced from the mind alone but as embodied, experienced and distributed among humans and non-humans or nature and culture, social and material (Gherardi, 2017). As Schatzki expresses “knowledge is no longer even the property of individuals, but instead a feature of groups, together with their material setups” (2001: 12). In other words, knowledge is situated and taken as an ongoing accomplishment manifested in the “performance” of

a practice (see Reckwitz, 2002 for a detailed understanding of practice-as-performance and practice-as-entity). Secondly, through the situated intractions of things with humans, understandings on ways of knowing, doing and saying are co-constituted, enacted in current performances and become enablers of future practice (Gherardi, 2017). Leading to the third key aspect, whereby, the unit of analysis moves from individuals and onto the enacted processes in a routinized, embodied and situated manner (Reckwitz, 2002).

In conclusion to this section, I have introduced and pointed towards an understanding of everyday practices as not separate from the materiality of artefacts nor exclusive resultants of social structures (Kimbell, 2012). Rather agency between humans/non-humans is distributed and seen entangled within a sociomaterial world when in the process of enacting everyday practices. The paper will now provide empirics to further anchor our understanding on mending as a reflective site of the above mentioned aspects.

Research design

This paper is based on empirical data collected over a seven-month period (November 2016-June 2017) of field work in 8 communal mending workshops in the city of Helsinki, Finland. The data consists of: 16 semi structured interviews of individual participants, one group discussion with 4 participants and 3 expert interviews of mending workshop organizers. The data collection forms part of the author's larger on-going doctoral research on mending practices. A three-level approach was created and implemented for the purpose of gathering data. The tabular representation of the data is provided below.

Table 1. Three-level data collection method

Levels	Objective	Data Collection Method	Data Recording Tools
One	Identify mending workshops Attend mending workshops	Web search, Snowball Field observation	Field notes
Two	Make contact and interview organizers	In-depth semi-structure interviews	Transcription of audio recording
Three	Interview participants Participate in mending workshops	Short surveys In-depth semi-structured interviews Group discussion Participant observation	Transcription of audio recording Field notes

The first level included identifying organizers of the mending workshops in Helsinki. Three organizers were selected in total, two (REMAKE and Korjaussarja) using online research and one (Repair-a-thon) through snowballing. Whereby, one of the organizers informed and introduced me to the third organizer (Flick, 2014). Once known, I decided to take part in the mending events with the aim of gaining access and permission to conduct my study at their respective workshops. Upon receiving verbal consent, the organizers acted as the gatekeepers giving access to not only partake in their own workshops but also make contact with other organizers in the community of menders. The location of each workshop varied depending on who was organizing and where the organizers could gain access for conducting the workshop. All of the mending workshops were free of charge and provided participants fee-free access to machines and other haberdashery needed to mend. The initial research at this level was limited to observing the activities in the workshops without making direct contact with the participants. These observations took note from an 'outsiders' perspective and documented the structure of conducting the workshops (Nicolini, 2009). Initial observations formed part of the field notes used in later analysis.

Following from this, in-depth semi-structured interviews were taken of the organizers in order to identify motivations behind their activities. Each of these three interviews lasted from 1 hour to 1 hour 40 minutes. Upon analysis of the transcriptions; perceptions of the organizers of their own

practice and that of the participants as a group was highlighted. This served as the grounds for level there of the data collection, here the motive was to zoom in and get an ‘insider’ view by tapping into the participants’ views on mending practices, motivations for joining the workshops, experiences while mending and observing the doings of the participants (Nicolini, 2009). This was done through short pre-workshop surveys, in-depth semi-structured interviews and one group discussion during the workshop with the participants. The conducted interviews and discussion lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour and were audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, observing the participants as they mended and self-reflexive activities by mending my own garments at the workshops also formed part of the field notes. A triangulation method was then used to analyze the data which included transcriptions of interviews, group discussion, short surveys and field notes (Flick, 2014).



Figure 1 Vernacular menders seen mending at a mending workshop held at an atelier (left) and at a café (right) in Helsinki. source: author's camera

The consolidated data was coded using open coding. Open coding assisted in forming descriptive categories and sub-categories when addressing the question of; “who are the menders?”, “how do they mend?” and “what happens when they mend?” The data revealed two major groups of menders: the organizers, and the participants. Owing to the fact that each of the three organizers held professional degrees in the field of fashion and/or textile design were grouped together as the “Professional Menders”. Within the said category, sub categories were created based on the varying motivations of each organizer as summarized in Table 2 (For a full description of the motivations of the professionals see Author 2017, under review).

Table 2 Types of Professional Menders and their motivations.

Professional Menders (Organizers)	Motivation (Professional Menders)
The Activist	Waste minimization
The Entrepreneur	Social enterprise
The Craft Teacher	Skill sharing

The second group was categorized as “Vernacular Menders” consisting of non-professional menders participating in the workshops. The focus of this paper has been on the knowing, doings and saying of the mending practices of vernacular menders. The term ‘vernacular’ is used in order to refer to

the everyday, mundane, ordinary mending as sites of creativity and reveal its importance for research within design (Hawkins, 2017). Using a sociomaterial theoretical lens to study mending practices of vernacular menders revealed the different types of menders. These subcategories emerged because of the variations observed in the ways of knowing, saying and doing mending. The vernacular menders were then categorized in the following manner: the restorer, the re-doer, the recruit and the reluctant.

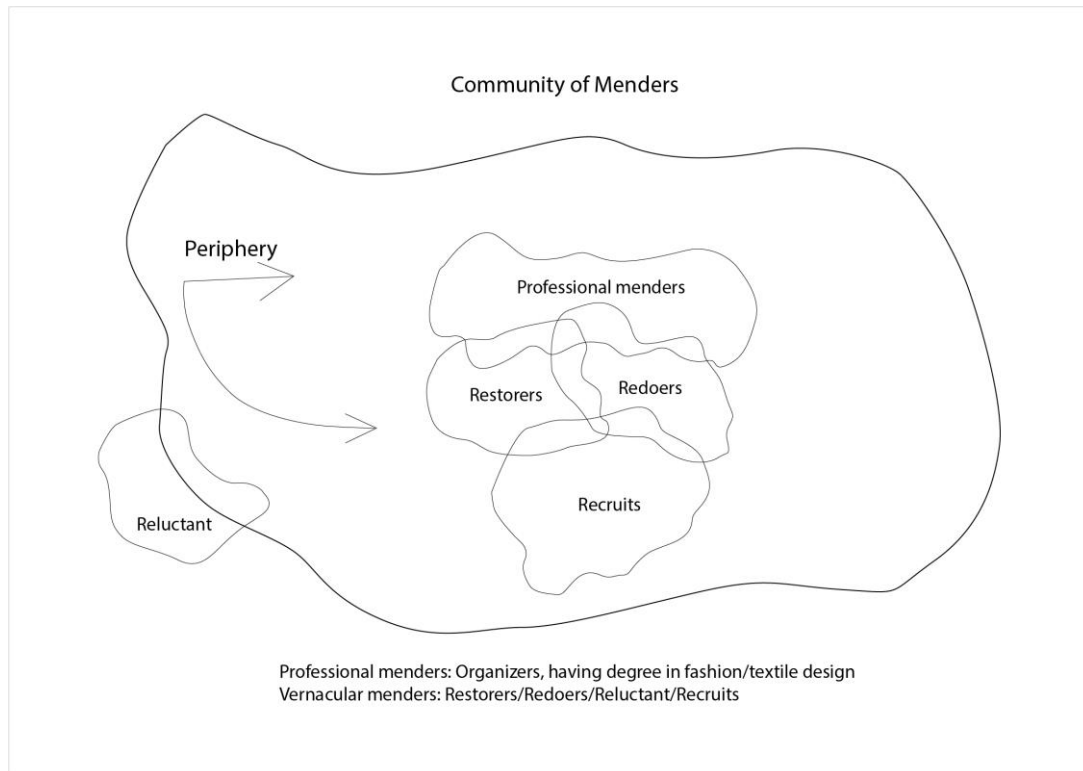


Figure 2 Community of menders: Professional and Vernacular menders participation positions. Source: This figure is an adaption of Lave and Wenger's (1998) "Relations of participation and non-participation" diagram (p.167)

These categories are dynamic and not taken to be static as vernacular menders did move in between them. What is important, however, is to highlight the distributive nature of mending as seen being performed by different bodies all engaged in routinized yet dynamic ways of doing mending (Reckwitz, 2002). A point to which I return in later sections (see 'Results', 'Emergent informal design' and 'Everyday creativities'). Additionally, it reveals the social nature of practices and points to what Lave and Wenger (1998) term as 'community of practices', whereby different bodies with varying knowledge all form part of the community by engaging in the same practice spread across space and time. Moreover, working consistently, whilst entangled with the materials, practitioners learn their way into a practice and move from 'peripheral' corners into becoming fully participating practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1998). Therefore, as the upcoming section will reveal these sub-categories hold great relevance for the present study.

Results

Distributive mending

The varying profiles of menders described here reveal the distributive nature of mending. This section provides a description of each of these categories or variations within the performances of mending as acted out by different bodies in the context of communal mending workshops. The four accounts reveal the situated, yet at times overlapping, ways in which mending is carried out and knowledge is distributed (see Figure 2). After which the discussion turns to the embodied nature of

the practice and explores ways of knowing as embodied entanglements within the sociomaterial setting when enacting practices of mending.

1. The restorer

I don't want to mend things if they don't look professional, {...} I think I would like it (the garment) to look like it was meant to look originally.

I'm, very precise, so I know when something is homemade and I prefer the type of mending that looks factory made and quite exact.

I want to have it (pair of pants) fixed in a way that doesn't show the damage. Mostly, I like to use the sewing machine to fix garments, I will put patches of same colour and fabric of that particular garment {...} Once I repaired clothes and it became very dramatic and then I didn't use it anymore. So the thing is to make it invisible.

Professional, original, precise, factory made, invisible, all point to the restorative qualities of mending. Turning back the clock on garments to erase any or all signs of breakdown is perhaps the most obvious light in which mending is perceived and expected to be performed (Spelman, 2002). Restoring garments to be neat, not grungy, and as they should be, is woven well in this practice.



Figure 3 Restorer digging through scrap denim (left) to find the exact colour so as to add patches inside (middle) the fraying crotch area to improve strengthen of jeans without showing the mend (right) . source: author's camera

However, restorers working within these peripheries are well versed in the language of materials and are anything but ordinary. They may not possess professional degrees in the field of garment mending or making but their knowledge is at par with that of the professionals and form a vital part in the community of menders. Their reason for coming to the workshops is mostly to get a little advice on their mends while sharing their expertise with others. Restorers seek comfort in the company of other menders and avoid isolated moments of mending. In the process of pristinely mending garments, restorers often end up invisibly adding features into the garment. In this manner, restorers might overlap with the works of re-doers. The next section will this explain further.

2. The re-doer

There is a little hole (on the jacket). I will cover it up and there is a saying if you want to cover it should make it to be bigger and show so it looks part of it. I will use embroidery mending. It's very easy you don't have to be the best embroider. I like the idea of doing something new, I have done this kind of work on t-shirts and if it doesn't succeed I do

more embroidery over it{...} I am more interested in experiments and I do this a little bit {...}I think for me I am always looking forward to the result I think it's fun.



Figure 4 Re-doer using visible embroidery mend to cover holes on sleeve of the jacket. source: author's camera

The re-doer is an experimenter and a risk taker. Re-doers bring new features onto the garments and re-configure the original design of the garment. However, such amends do not always have to be visible for as seen restorers too can re-do invisibly. Thus, revealing an overlap and the fluid nature of the said categories. Additionally, the re-doer well recognize the variety and differences in the demands of each mending job (Spelman, 2002) and are motivated by a strong desire to learn and improve their technique. Therefore, the range of knowledge oscillates from basic to advance in this group. Moreover, re-doers normally do not have all the needed equipment at home and participate in the workshop to gain access to materials. Many a times, they will be seen making do with what is available and improvise with those limited materials as they go along with their mends. As can be seen in the following excerpt:

I repaired it (pullover) using very visible repair and many of the repairs were even on it when I bought it{...} I find that it gives something special and something more to the garment, I like to do visible mending{...} I have made some very funny things with visible mending. I also have these woollen trousers and then there were a lot of holes {...} and I didn't have the right colour for these trousers because they were deep blue and I used pink to repair it

Where a restorer might spend hours searching for the perfect coloured thread, a re-doer is more spontaneous and not afraid to work with the odds. Similarly while a restorer might hide the additions made to the garment the re-doer makes it a point to show and highlight them. Both, however, when in the process of mending the garments learn from the original design of the garment and enhance it. An aspect I return to later (See 'Everyday creativities').

3. The recruit

I brought my trousers that I stopped wearing because they were ripped here (pointing to the crotch area) so I want to fix them and I don't know how to operate the sewing machine and I thought the machine will be the best for this because it is what you call a double stitch. And I learned how to operate with a needle in primary school but I wasn't very good so I thought I will come here and learn how to use a machine.

The recruit is a first timer and has little to no experience with repairing, possessing very basic knowledge. The recruits want to learn how to put their clothing back into use. They are open to

trying out various techniques of (invisible and visible) mending and are keen to learn. Some might be shy to use the sewing machine at first and are normally found around the hand stitching tables.



Figure 5 Recruit seen consulting the professional mender as the two work through the mend with the materials. source: author's camera

Taking inspiration from their garments, professional menders and other vernacular menders, recruits collaboratively work on their mends as seen in the following narrative:

I was nervous about using the machine because I'm not that used to sewing but we had good tutors and were helping and being positive. And I was hoping I could replace this section of the jeans and Piia (Professional mender, REMAKE) suggested I could take this part straight from the other jeans and I haven't even thought about that before and then I was like aha let's do this so I am really pleased with the outcome{...} now I will use my skills after wards and also show some other people the same technique it has been very useful and productive evening!

4. The reluctant

My son's jeans got ripped in the crotch and it was a big hole and he brought it to me but I did not know what to do with them and they are in a bag in the summer cottage of broken clothes.

If it's just socks then I will throw it away but if I like it I ask someone to fix it for me. I have used a machine at school and haven't done it for it ages. I probably should but I ask my friend {..} I think to start is the hardest part. I would probably throw away if my dress breaks and I don't have any help.

The above examples are of two women, one had brought in a Burberry jacket with a broken button in need of fixing while the other one brought trousers owned by her mother with holes in them. The two women although reluctant to use the sewing machine or their hands to mend did not hesitate from telling how they wanted the garment to be fixed. Both wanted the garments to be restored without the work being visible and in this way sharing some of the qualities with the restorers. Reluctants out of fear of ruining the garment do not take a try at fixing it. However, they want to consult and tell the professional mender what to do in very particular manner. They select the

materials themselves and know what and how they want it to be. In this way, find themselves half-way between being outsiders and peripheral member of the community of mender as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 6 Professional mender seen mending the jacket of a reluctant vernacular mender as per his requirement. source: author's camera.

Additionally, some even show willingness to try mending themselves after seeing how it is done in the workshop. They learn in terms of seeing but do not “do” at this point, yet are inspired to try. As seen in the following conversation:

Reluctant: came with my friend randomly. That's it. And I found out that I could fix something that was broken. Both the zipper and the bottom button of my jacket were broken {...} today we fixed the zipper it's a little bit wonky but it works.

MD: What do you normally do when garments rip or buttons break?

Reluctant: Well if it would be a button like this I would find someone to do it for me. But now I know how to fix this (button) one and she (professional mender) showed me and if the same problem happens again I will try to fix it myself.

Discussion of findings:

This section will now explore each of the following three aspects as they emerged through the various practices of vernacular menders at the communal workshops.

Embodied knowledge:

*I prefer using my hands to repair. I feel I have some kind of **connection with the garment** and it's somehow more under my control when it is in my hand (Restorer)*

*It (mending) relaxing and takes **my mind off things** and lets me unwind and **I wasn't thinking about anything** (Re-doer)*

Every time someone began mending a garment in the workshops, be it a professional mender or a vernacular, it would always begin with touching the fabric and feeling it in between the thumb and fingers. After which the broken area would be felt and slightly scratched with one's finger nail whilst turning the fabric inside out and back in again. The direction of the fibres would be felt and the fingers were seen grazing in the direction of each yarn looking intently at the garment construction. A constant use of the hands was in motion feeling, touching and assessing the material properties of the garments prior to repair. Once diagnosed the use of the hands would not stop for as the menders began mending, a conversation in motion was witnessed between the mender and the matter. Not knowing who was telling whom what to do next. From the use of the mouth to soften the thread just enough to accurately thread the needle to keeping the body in particular postures

while working through the mend, the body's reliance on and inseparability from the tactile materiality of the work became effortlessly prominent. Not only was the sense of touch visible but the sense of sight and feel were ever present too.



Figure 7 Using hands whilst encircled in a group of varying vernacular menders collaboratively working with the materials on their mends mend.. source: author's camera

One revealing example was when a man brought a woollen coat in need of a button stitch up to one of the workshop events. As he was not happy with the way the jacket closed when it was first fixed, he returned to the workshop a second time. The troublesome button was placed together in consultation with the professional mender in various spots several times. Fitting and checking in the mirror, the two bodies worked in tandem with the sewing pins pinned in the coat to find the most aesthetically pleasing spot for it. Using the hands to fix and feel the fit of the coat before finalizing on the best spot for it to be sewn on. These observations point to a reliance on a kind of knowledge that can be seen as not purely coming from an intellectually charged cognitive process rather an embodied one (Strati, 2007). Additionally, it seems to be entangled in the social (consultations with the professional) along with the material qualities of the coat and the senses and sensibility of the body. Strati (2007) terms this type of knowing as 'sensible knowledge' where the intraactions of the hands with matter being worked with provide basis for the enactments of on-going and future practices. The two are entangled and the knowledge being derived is both in the action and in the sensing. According to Gherardi (2012) material engagements such as these enable the tactile and visual senses of the body and inform the performance of practices.



Figure 8 Vernacular menders uses hand to scratch, sense, feel and converse with the materials when trying to understand the cause of the garments breakdown. source: author's camera

In other words, when using a sociomaterial lens to study practices, knowledge and ways of knowing are not constricted to purely the mind. In fact, an egalitarian approach is taken to the study of practices whereby dualities between mind/body, human/non-human, matter/ideas, are blurred. Knowledge is then taken to be embodied and a reliance on sensible knowledge is seen in the enactment of practices as exemplified through the above examples. With this comes also the distributive nature of knowledge amongst various bodies (Henke, 2000). Ways of knowing are not confined to just one but various bodies and things. Ergo practices are seen as distributive and ways of knowing are performed and enacted in varying degrees. When they are performed, different bodies enact them in different ways. This distributive nature of practices is then seen in the bodies of the restorer, re-doer, recruit and reluctant vernacular menders, along with the professional menders, all of whom form part of the community of menders. Using a sociomaterial lens to understand the process of mending reveals that knowledge of and knowing how to mend is an embodied and distributive phenomenon (Gherardi, 2016). It brings to surface the importance of and reliance on materiality and bodily movements guided through what is called the “intelligence of the hands” in the enactment of these practices (Strati, 2007: 68). This implies that the process of thinking is not sourced purely in isolated cognitive exercises. Rather comes from the co-constitution of various minds/bodies entangled in sociomaterial surroundings. Taking such a view on every day practices also help in recognizing subtle ingenuities that abound in the on-going shaping of artefacts. The next section will reveal how through the sociomaterially immersed practices of vernacular menders informal design outcomes are birthed.

Emergent informal design:

I’ve been meaning to fix these jeans since I fell down two weeks ago and tore the knee {...} so it was T-shaped the way it had torn {...} this is the burros stitching {...} I drew it (the pattern) on a paper. And then I made the pattern on the jeans. And decided to sort of cut a small piece out and make a square and twist the sides inside. First I stitched the square so it is stuck to the patch behind then I made the crosses. Then I made them (the crosses) by hand {...} then I thought I don’t want to make it like a square so I made it a bit uneven from the grid (Re-doer).

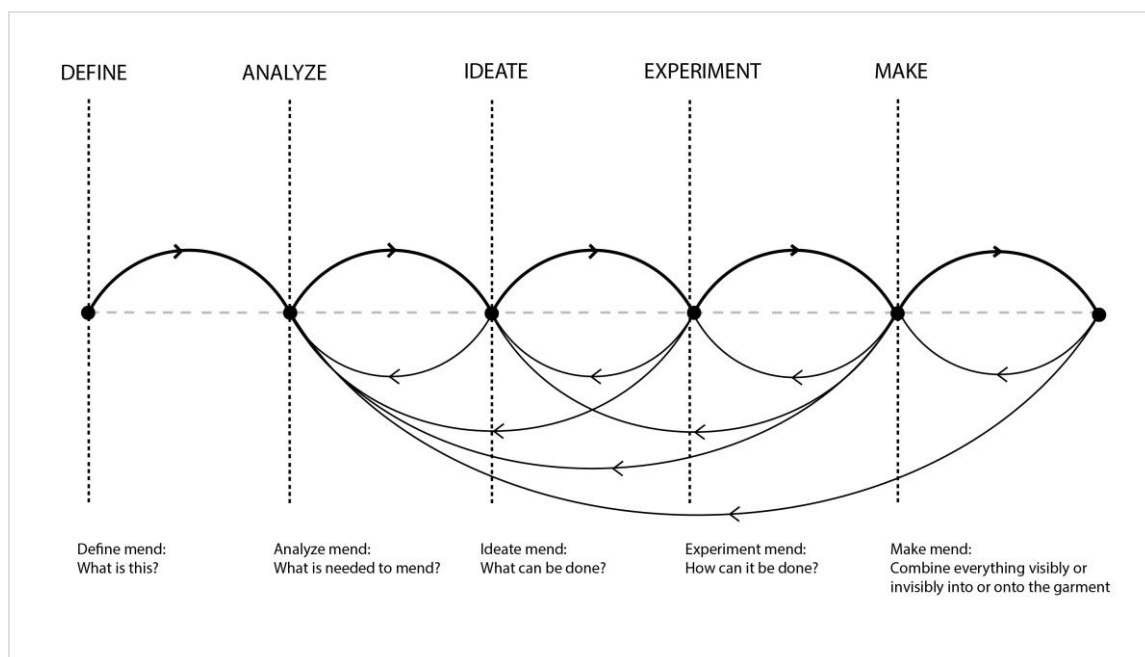


Figure 9 Process of mending. Source: Author’s work.

The process of mending as it unfolded whilst the vernacular menders mended, be it a re-doer or a reluctant, always began with the identification of a problem. In this instance, the problem took form

in the breakdown of a garment due to for example a broken button or a ripped trouser. Once defined the next step resulted in the analysis of the broken material and the self (embodied knowledge) followed by an examination of the available material and if needed the surrounding knowledge (consulting other menders). Analysis of material would occur almost simultaneously in action and conversation among and between all menders and materials. The menders would not always state what the next course of action would be but through the enactments of their practices the next steps emerged and became visible. This normally came in the shape of menders drawing ideas out on pieces of paper, chalking on patterns they wished to embroider on their mend or placing patches of scrap fabric to mask holes in the garments. Followed by an experimental phase whereby different threads, buttons, patches and other haberdasheries were temporarily used to get a visual before selecting the final ones leading into the visibly or invisibly mended end results.



Figure 10 Process of mending: define (upper left)-analyse (upper middle)-ideate(upper right)-experiment (lower left)-mend: visible (lower right). source: author's camera

However, this process is not to be taken as a linear one. Quiet often, menders would break away from one phase and go back to an earlier stage of the mend if their envisioned experiments failed to reflect through till the making of the mends (See Figure 9). Thus, revealing the continuously re-mouldable, dynamic and looped nature of mending as is told well through the following quote:

At first I used pink yarn because I thought it will look cool, but as I did it then it was just a ridiculous idea {...} so it was a mixture of making a pattern but also not to make it show too much or make it special in a way. Because these are out door pants and I thought it will be a nice detail but also not show from far away that's why I changed the

idea of using the bright coloured yarn. Because I wanted to go wild but then I'm very minimalistic it's better to go for the classic style even in this (cargo pants) (Re-doer)



Figure 11 Dynamic process of mending where vernacular mender began with a pink yarn (middle) but ended up revising and starting again from the ideation phase and finished with black visible mended (right)

Within these on-going enactments, the vernacular menders collectively used mind/body, social/material, human/non-human elements whilst orchestrating paths towards sound solutions. In their performances moments of improvisational ingenuity were often found. This could take the shape of uniquely visible embroidery mending or invisible mock safety stitches added onto or into the garments, improving garment performativity or aestheticism. Now, to the naked eye perhaps something like an invisible mend might seem to have added nothing new to a garment and instead taken as just a mundane part of fixing. However, it was within these routine moments of even invisibly mended hidden solutions one finds a reconfiguration of the original design assisting in the garments transformative continuity.

Solutions such as these often lurk at the outskirts of professionally recognised design and are easily overlooked (Finizola et al., 2012). However, when using a sociomaterial practice lens to study mending, one becomes sensitive to these hidden features. Due to which, design is no longer exclusively found in the creations of those holding academic degrees. Rather an appreciation of what can be called informal design or 'spontaneous manifestations' of daily artefacts is granted (Finizola et al., 2012; Kimbell, 2012). Informal design can be understood in terms of solutions resulting from a reliance on non-industrialized modes of production carried out by non-professional designers for the purposes of extending the planned life of artefacts when in daily use (Finizola et al., 2012). Therefore, all the various sketches of patterns, prototype patches pinned on mends to get a visual, placing buttons in various places, experimenting with different threads before the actual mend is stitched (visibly or invisibly) too are given equal importance. For they are seen aiding in the renewing of garments, and also form part of this process (Kimbell, 2012). 'Things' or artefacts are then seen as open and constantly in a state of what Ingold and Hallam (2007) call 'becoming' and being re-shaped or re-constituted whilst in use (Shove, 2007). It is within the collective embodied enactments of mending, distributed across various bodies (not just professional designers), entangled within the sociomaterial that everyday informal design solutions emerge. The next section will now take the discussion further by exploring the creative aspects found embedded in the dynamic practices of vernacular mending.

Everyday creativities:

I have two needles one is bigger than the other and I use it for everything and it works (Restorer).

I don't have any sewing machine and I don't have skills {...} I'm hand sewing this kind off dress (button downed) {...} I really like to use this dress in the summer time and its usually nice to use it without a t-shirt or top under it so now I can be relaxed after putting this clasp button I found here that I won't show anything from here (pointing to the chest area) (Re-doer).

Using a sociomaterial practice lens to study practices allows for a sharper recognition of the subtleties of creativity found within everyday mending. Instead of waiting for the radically ingenious moments one finds creativity in the continual “making of the world” (Tanggaard, 2012). Here humans share a close relationship with non-humans and things, which are always in the becoming (Ingold and Haram, 2007). Whether showing through visible boros stitching or invisibly adding a feature (clasp button) to a dress to make it fit better. These manifestations imply creativity as not an individual trait achievable by only professional menders. Nor is it understood to be an outcome of individual divergent thinking but comes from contact with the materials surrounding us. Making do with what is available (re-doer) or sniffing out materials to make garments look exactly (restorers) as they were, creativity is taken as “fundamentally relational” (Tanggaard, 2012: 25). Therefore, restorers like the non-restorers, vernaculars like professionals, all are entangled in a world of materials with histories that communicate “pre-existing ways of doing” and “emerge as part of specific activity and become part of performative action in the future” (Tanggaard, 2012: 25). As can be seen in the following example of a vernacular mender who initially was following the direction of the threads of the other buttons but upon engaging further with the materials realized the following and altered his way:

I think you put the thread here and here rather than making a cross but I think the rope (shaped on the button) is a guide for the thread to go, the button has holes so the thread goes in and when you are moving the thread it is more safer in the ropes so when you are doing something the thread doesn't get ruined. And it was supposed to be sewn by following the shape of the rope rather than make a crisscross. It's meant for the thread. And maybe somebody else had repaired it in a crisscross before I found the coat (Restorer)

While Lapolla and Sanders (2015) might explain everyday creativity sourced in an individual's skill alone, this paper brings the material basis of creativity to the front. Like informal design, creativity is seen to be emergent and not taken as a generalized formula to be applied from above onto a practice nor reserved for the 'exceptional' few (Taangaard, 2012). Rather, it is embedded within these small adaptations and improvisations made when enacting practices which on the surface seem standardized. These improvisations are not always exceptional or loud but can also be found in the mundane, the subtle, the hidden, and the ordinary. Therefore, unlike Lapolla and Sanders (2015) who place mending on the lower ends of creativity and describe it as lacking in the creation of 'original ideas' (p.185). This study, argues that creativity resides in the intractions of the material with social, of the human with the non-human, and in the exceptional as well as the everyday. It becomes a means through which what is known already is recreated (Tanggaard, 2012). Hence, as seen through the aforementioned examples, mending takes current ways of knowing and doing as starting points for building onto. In this on-going embodied process, vernacular menders constantly rely on the use of their hands and bodies whilst collectively entangled in materials resulting in dynamic and originally visible or invisible mended solutions.

Concluding thoughts

This paper provided empirics from a seven month qualitative research on mending practices of non-professional menders in the city of Helsinki and identified them as vernacular menders. Their dynamic practices were studied at length and revealed the situated, embodied, routinized yet creative process of mending. The created outputs of the vernacular menders resulted in what was termed as informal design and pointed towards a de-figuring of mainstream conceptualizations on design and creativity. Moreover, like professional designers, the inextricable relations shared between vernacular menders with sociomaterial elements when in the process of mending, too were brought to light. The aim of this study, therefore, resides in suggesting an extension of current understanding on design authorship to include creatively rich one off solutions resulting from non-professional designers' material tinkering. The relevance of taking such a view might better assist in expanding knowledge on sociomaterial-enabled cultures around design in the future.

References

- Author (2017) Journal article, under review
- Alexander, C. (1964). Notes on the Synthesis of Form (Vol. 5). Harvard University Press.
- Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 28(3), 801-831.
- Barad, K. (2007). Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning. Duke University Press.
- Chapman, J. (2013, 15 October 2017). Repair. Textile Toolbox online. Retrieved from: <http://www.textiletoolbox.com/research-writing/repair/>
- Cross, N. (2006). Designerly ways of knowing (pp. 1-13). Springer London.
- Drazin, A. and Küchler, S. (2015), *The Social Life of Materials*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Finizola, Fátima, Coutinho, Solange G and Cavalcanti (2012), In *Virginia Design*, V. Vernacular design: a discussion on its concept. Priscila Lena Farias/Anna Calvera, 552.
- Flick, U. (2014). An introduction to qualitative research. Sage.
- Gherardi, S. (2012). How to conduct a practice-based study: Problems and methods. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gherardi, S. (2016). SOCIOMATERIALITY IN POSTHUMAN PRACTICE THEORY. *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners*, 38-51.
- Graham, S., & Thrift, N. (2007). Out of order: understanding repair and maintenance. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(3), 1-25.
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Hawkins, H. (2017). *Creativity*. London: Routledge.
- Henke, C. R. (1999). The mechanics of workplace order: Toward a sociology of repair. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 55-81.
- Ingold, T., & Hallam, E. (2007). Creativity and cultural improvisation: An introduction. In *Creativity and cultural improvisation*.
- Jackson, S. J. (2014). Rethinking Repair. *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*, 221-39.
- Kimbell, L. (2011). Rethinking design thinking: Part I. *Design and Culture*, 3(3), 285-306.
- Kimbell, L. (2012). Rethinking design thinking: Part II. *Design and Culture*, 4(2), 129-148.
- Lapolla, K. M. F. A., & Sanders, E. B. N. Using Co-creation to Engage Everyday Creativity in Reusing and Repairing Apparel.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice*. Retrieved June, 9, 2008.
- Myers, W. (2012). *Bio design*. Museum of Modern Art.
- Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming in and out: Studying practices by switching theoretical lenses and trailing connections. *Organization Studies*, 30(12), 1391-1418.
- Orlikowski, W. J., & Scott, S. V. (2008). Sociomateriality: challenging the separation of technology, work and organization. *Academy of Management Annals*, 2(1), 433-474.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a theory of social practices: a development in culturalist theorizing. *European journal of social theory*, 5(2), 243-263.
- Schatzki, T. R (2001). Introduction. *Practice Theory*. In Savigny, E. V., Knorr-Cetina, K., & Schatzki, T. R. (2001). *The Practice turn in contemporary theory*. London: Routledge, pp 1-14.
- Shove, E., Watson, M., Hand, M., & Ingram, J. (2007). *The design of everyday life*. Berg.
- Shove, E, Pantzar, M and Watson, M.(2012). *The Dynamics of social Practice: Everyday Life and How it Changes*, Sage, Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore.
- Spelman, E. V. (2003). *Repair: The impulse to restore in a fragile world*. Beacon Press.
- Strati, A. (2007). Sensible knowledge and practice-based learning. *Management learning*, 38(1), 61-77.
- Tanggaard, L. (2013). The sociomateriality of creativity in everyday life. *Culture & Psychology*, 19(1), 20-32.
- Twigger Holroyd, A. (2013, January). Rethinking the designer's role: the challenge of unfinished knitwear design. In *Futurescan 2: Collective Voices* (pp. 162-171). Association of Fashion & Textiles Courses.